

Ohio YM (Barnesville)

The Great Depression dominated the decade of the 1930s. It began while Herbert Hoover was serving as the first Quaker President. Throughout the decade, Ohio Friends took important steps to lower the hedge in order to be better able to serve Christ Jesus in new circumstances.

The Quaker organizational structure was being simplified throughout the decade. Following the YM's direction in 1930, MMs with a single PM began to discontinue the PM. In 1931, the PMs were laid down at Salem, New Garden, and Fairhope. Other meetings followed suit quickly: Chesterfield, Middleton, and Springfield in 1932 and Harrisville in 1936. By the end of the decade, only four preparative meetings survived. By this time, only Stillwater MM had more than one PM. A change made without YM approval came in 1935 when Short Creek QM entered into joint session.

Changes came to Olney as well. In 1930, Gilbert Thomas became Superintendent. Thomas, a farmer who had been active in the Farm Bureau, was controversial because he was the first non-plain dressed Friend to serve in that position. He faced serious challenges at Olney. The Depression forced most local Friends schools to close, and Olney only survived by lowering tuition. Gilbert's wife Rachel died in 1938, which was a great loss to Gilbert, but he persevered in his calling to serve the Lord at Olney.

An important event in Ohio YM history was a travel in ministry by Carl Patterson and W. Mifflin Hall to Europe in 1932. They visited Friends in Ireland, England, Denmark, and Norway. Their visit to Fritchley was particularly helpful, as Friends there were very discouraged at the time. Friends in London YM interestingly enough were vocal in their concerns about losing money on their investments in India due to the activities of Ghandi. In Norway, Patterson expressed a concern that they were looking too much to London YM for direction, so he "directed them to a higher source." Patterson and Hall returned home just prior to Ohio YM in 1932 and gave lengthy reports there.

The visit by Patterson and Hall opened discussions about how much Ohio Friends should interact with other Quaker-related bodies. Portions of the epistles from London and Ireland YM were included in an address to absent members in 1932. The YM did not have unity to send a delegate to the 1937 Friends World Conference but did appoint Charles P. Morlan as delegate to FWCC in 1940.

In the mid-1930s, there was a brief movement to merge Ohio YM (Wilburite) and Ohio YM (Gurneyite). A national committee was appointed to visit the two bodies in 1936. Two Friends on the committee from Philadelphia YM reported on their visit. One of the two was William Bacon Evans, who was very favorably impressed by Ohio YM: this was the start of two decades of intervisitation by WBE. His 1936 report on Ohio YM commended Ohio Friends for not substituting "oratory" for ministry, having limited calls to contribute to "worthy causes," and in general for having little desire to shift to what J. Henry Bartlett called a "conference type of Yearly Meeting." A young Friend on the committee had a very different experience. He was bothered by the fact that he couldn't get cigarettes at either YM, no dancing took place at either, and ministers at both mentioned in messages. The chief differences he saw in the two were the greater attendance of the Wilburites and the fact they had less "fear of intellectual freedom."

One of the most active YM committees in the 1930s was the Peace Committee. Throughout the decade, it donated books to the Olney library (and to public schools) on peace topics and organized the Seventh Day program at YM, usually with speakers or a panel on a peace issue. President Hoover was commended for his peace efforts in 1931. The committee contacted Ohio State University to express its objections to compulsory military training (1935) and sent delegates to a National Anti-War Congress in DC (1938). In 1939, the Meeting for Sufferings approved a minute to the heads of state in Europe setting forth the Christian basis for peace just after the onset of World War II.

1930 to 1940

Ohio Friends were involved in the establishing new meetings. The new independent meeting in Cleveland first met in 1925 with an Ohio Friend. James Henderson and Cyrus Cooper visited it in 1931-1932. Other Ohio Friends were involved in establishing a meeting in Columbus in 1932, and George and Dortha Patterson worshipped there (but kept their memberships at Chesterfield).

A regional Friends conference was held at Olney in 1935. During the sessions at Stillwater, plain-dressed Ohio Friends sat on the upper tier of facing benches to oversee the event. This was remarkable to Friends of other YMs, most of whom had rarely seen a plain dressed Friend. On First Day, the young Friends sang a hymn; it was said at the time that was the first instance of congregational singing at Stillwater.

Pastoral Friends from North Carolina at Olney in 1935

Thomas A. Crawford was a minister at Upper Springfield Meeting. He was Clerk of the YM of Ministers & Elders from 1901-1924. He had a concern to travel to Australia, and he actually died during his visit there (1933). He was buried in Brisbane.

Jacob Maule, son of Joshua Maule, died in 1933. He attended Concord and was the last recorded minister in Short Creek MM.

Concord Meeting was laid down in 1936. It was the first meeting organized inside the State of Ohio. The meeting house, built in 1868, was moved across the road and converted into a twin house. The burial ground remains in its historic location in a curve of the road.